

Message Text

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ACTION EA-14

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INR-10 L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-10 PA-04 RSC-01 PRS-01 SPC-03

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FM AMEMBASSY TAIPEI

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 996

INFO AMCONSUL HONG KONG

USLO PEKING

AMEMBASSY TOKYO

COMUSTDC

C O N F I D E N T I A L TAIPEI 1081

TDC FOR J-22

EO 11652 GDS

TAG PINT PINS SGEN TW

SUBJECT: STUDENT ATTITUDES

1. FOLLOWING ARE SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS OF TAIPEI'S A-30,
"ATTITUDES OF TAIWAN'S UNIVERSITY STUDENTS."

2. DURING THE PAST THREE YEARS TAIWAN'S TRADITIONALLY QUIESCENT
UNIVERSITY STUDENT COMMUNITY HAS GRADUALLY BECOME MORE POLITICIZED.
PROCESS SEEMS TO HAVE BEGUN WITH SENKAKUS DEMONSTRATIONS IN 1971,
AND HAS BEEN REINFORCED BY SUCH EVENTS AS UN EXPULSION, NIXON-
KISSINGER VISITS TO PEKING, AND ROC-JAPAN BREAK IN RELATIONS.
WHILE STUDENTS NOW PAY GREATER ATTENTION TO POLITICAL TOPICS--
PARTICULARLY QUESTIONS INVOLVING US-PRC-ROC RELATIONS--THEY
NEVERTHELESS REMAIN MORE CONCERNED WITH PASSING
EXAMS, FINDING GIRLFRIENDS AND JOBS, AND OBTAINING VISAS
TO US.

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3. IN GENERAL, POLITICAL TOPICS OF GREATEST CONCERN TO

STUDENTS ARE THOSE WHICH AFFECT THEIR OWN AND TAIWAN'S FUTURE. OVERWHELMINGLY, STUDENTS WANT CONTINUATION OF TAIWAN'S SEPARATE STATUS, FEEL THE NEED FOR AN OUTSIDE PROTECTOR OF THAT STATUS, AND FEAR THAT US-PRC RAPPROCHEMENT WILL ERODE US WILLINGNESS TO PROTECT TAIWAN. INTER ALIA, THEY FEAR A BREAK IN RELATIONS HERE WOULD DENY THEM OPPORTUNITIES FOR STUDY IN US.

4. STUDENTS THEMSELVES SEE DISTINCTIONS BETWEEN TAIWANESE AND MAINLANDERS AS BLURRING, BUT COMMUNAL IDENTIFICATIONS REMAIN STRONG AND THERE CONTINUE TO BE DISTINCT DIFFERENCES IN ORIENTATION BETWEEN THE TWO GROUPS. MAINLANDER STUDENTS ARE MORE LIKELY TO BE POLITICALLY ACTIVE, TO HAVE GENERAL SENSE OF IDENTIFICATION WITH A CHINESE NATIONAL ENTITY, TO HAVE POSITIVE VIEW OF PREMIER CHIANG CHING-KUO, AND TO SEE STUDY OVERSEAS AS ESCAPE FROM TAIWAN. TAIWANESE ARE MORE LIKELY TO BE INTERESTED IN JOBS AND FAMILY, TO SEE TAIWAN AS AN ENTITY DISTINCT FROM CHINA, TO BE MISTRUSTFUL OF CCK, AND TO SEE OVERSEAS STUDY AS A JOB PREPARATION. BOTH GROUPS HAVE VERY NEGATIVE IMAGE OF THE PRC AND OPPOSE REUNIFICATION WITH COMMUNIST MAINLAND.

5. THOUGH HARDLY ACTIVISTS IN THE AMERICAN CAMPUS SENSE, A SMALL (LESS THAN 10 PERCENT) BUT IMPORTANT GROUP OF STUDENT "ACTIVISTS" DISCUSS POLITICAL QUESTIONS WITH RELATIVE OPENNESS AND OCCASIONALLY WILL "SUPPORT" AN OUTSIDE POLITICAL CANDIDATE. THIS GROUP WHICH PRODUCES STUDENT LEADERS IS CONCENTRATED IN THE TAIPEI AREA, MAINLY IN THE HUMANITIES AND LAW DEPARTMENTS, AND INCLUDES BOTH MAINLANDERS AND TAIWANESE.

6. WHILE DIFFERING ON WHO SHOULD RULE, ALMOST ALL ACTIVISTS WANT TAIWAN TO CONTINUE SEPARATE FROM THE MAINLAND. NEVERTHELESS, THERE ARE A FEW MAINLANDERS WHO IDENTIFY WITH THE PRC AND WANT REUNIFICATION NOW; SOMEWHAT MORE WOULD FAVOR UNITING IN A NEW, POST-CHIANG, POST-MAO CHINA. SIMILARLY, THERE ARE SOME TAIWANESE NATIONALISTS WHO ADVOCATE DECISIVE MOVEMENT NOW TOWARD A JURIDICALLY INDEPENDENT, TAIWANESE-RUN REPUBLIC, BUT WE DO NOT BELIEVE MANY, IF ANY, STUDENTS HERE FORMALLY BELONG TO ORGANIZED

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TAIWAN INDEPENDENCE GROUPS.

7. SOME YOUNG POLITICIANS AND STUDENT INTELLECTUALS CLAIM THAT STUDENTS HAVE STRONG SENSE OF IDENTITY WITH THE POOR AND ARE CRITICAL OF GOVERNMENT'S PERFORMANCE. ALTHOUGH THIS SENTIMENT DOES EXIST AMONG STUDENTS, FEW DO MUCH ABOUT IT. NEVERTHELESS, SCHOOL AND YOUTH CORPS ADMINISTRATORS ARE SUFFICIENTLY CONCERNED TO TRY TO CHANNEL THE

FEELINGS INTO SOCIAL PROJECTS.

8. ACTIVIST STUDENTS WERE KEY MOBILIZING FIGURES IN THE 1971 SENKAKUS DEMONSTRATIONS. IF A BROAD, UNIFYING ISSUE AROSE, ONE WHICH SEEMED SUFFICIENTLY PATRIOTIC TO AVOID GOVERNMENT REPRISAL, DEMONSTRATIONS COULD TAKE PLACE

AGAIN. ISSUES OF THIS TYPE WOULD INCLUDE THE SOUTH CHINA SEA ISLAND, A MAJOR CHANGE IN US-ROC RELATIONS, OR A MAJOR JAPANESE MOVE AGAINST ROC INTERESTS.

9. THE GOVERNMENT DOES NOT WANT A VIGOROUS STUDENT MOVEMENT, AND WATCHES FOR SIGNS OF STUDENT ACTIVISM MORE CAREFULLY NOW THAN IN 1971, MAKING DEVELOPMENT OF A WIDESPREAD MOVEMENT DIFFICULT. WHILE THE CHINA YOUTH CORPS MONITORS STUDENTS AND SPONSORS EXTRA-CURRICULAR ACTIVITIES TO KEEP STUDENTS BUSY, IT APPARENTLY IS NOT AN EFFECTIVE CONTROL APPARATUS. THE ROTC INSTRUCTORS ON CAMPUSES, MOST OF WHOM HAVE HAD SOME "POLITICAL WARFARE" TRAINING, ARE A MORE EFFECTIVE CONTROL ARM. HOWEVER, NEITHER THE CHINA YOUTH CORPS NOR THE ROTC INSTRUCTORS WERE ABLE TO GIVE THE GOVERNMENT MUCH ADVANCE WARNING OF MOUNTING STUDENT CONCERN OVER THE SENKAKUS ISSUE IN 1971.

10. PRESS TREATMENT OF CONTROVERSIAL ISSUES IN AN IMPORTANT FACTOR IN AROUSING OR DAMPING DOWN STUDENT ACTIVISM. THE STUDENTS ARE MOST LIKELY TO BE AROUSED BY "PATRIOTIC" ISSUE WHICH BUILDS GRADUALLY TO A CRISIS, GIVING TIME FOR STUDENT OPINION TO BE SOLIDIFIED. DESPITE GOVERNMENT CONTROLS, NEWS OF DEMONSTRATIONS ON EVEN ONE CAMPUS WOULD QUICKLY SPREAD AND COULD STIMULATE STUDENTS ISLAND-WIDE.

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11. SOME OF THE MORE "RADICAL" INDEPENDENT POLITICIANS LOOK TO POLITICALLY CONCERNED UNIVERSITY GRADUATES AS THEIR "NATURAL CONSTITUENCY". SO FAR IT HAS BEEN A TAME CONSTITUENCY COMPARED TO ITS COUNTERPARTS IN KOREA AND THAILAND. HOWEVER, THE CONSTRAINTS WHICH HAVE SERVED SO EFFECTIVELY IN THE PAST WILL PROBABLY DIMINISH. WE EXPECT THAT AS POLITICAL SOPHISTICATION GROWS ON COLLEGE CAMPUSES, AND AS THE NUMBER OF RETURNED STUDENTS INCREASES, ACTIVISM ITSELF WILL GROW BOTH ON AND OFF CAMPUS-- AS WILL GOVERNMENT CONCERN.

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